

Black History Month Essay

The black experience in America is truly unique – it has no real parallel. Although African-Americans are one of the most unique races in America, they are also some of the least foreign of all citizens, due to their forceful adoption of American culture in replace of their own. Although this runs back many hundreds of years ago, it still leaves profound traces on African-Americans to today. They share a very rich experience and colorful memories. Perhaps it is true that blacks have faced and struggled with challenges unfamiliar to any of us today. The most obvious challenge that these people faced was discrimination and segregation from the rest of society. Often thought as the inferior race for many centuries, this crushing pressure definitely had serious impacts on them – as it would for anyone who had to deal with such deep racism. Another obstacle blacks were faced with was unjust laws and inequality. Even after documents, such as the Declaration of Independence and Constitution, were signed, promising equal rights and liberties to all men, blacks were not included in the definition of “men.” Rights that were granted to whites were restricted to blacks; freedoms provided to whites were barred from blacks; liberties given to whites did not pertain to the black man. This led to frustration and mental stress, which sometimes proved to be too much to handle. No man – white or black – should be placed under this tremendous stress and pressure. *The Great Debaters* illustrated the black experience, by depicting the many challenges blacks were faced with in their daily struggles.

Discrimination against blacks was incredibly common throughout American society. It was so deep that white adults taught their kids to start hating blacks as soon as they were born. Kids should not be entangled in such hate issues, yet parents forced the false idea of the black inferiority into their children’s mind. This can be seen in *The Great Debaters* when the white kids intentionally throw their father’s pig into the road when they saw the Farmer’s car coming down the road. It’s absolutely horrible that these kids – not even teenagers yet – could commit such a deed. Dr. Farmer was forced to give up his paycheck to compensate for the loss of the pig. When the mob of white men see Mr. Tolsen’s car come, they hesitate. After recognizing that he was black, the crowd rushed after them, attempting to attack the innocent blacks inside. Hate is the principle cause for all the bad things that happen in this world, whether it be petty crime or warfare. It saddens me to see how blacks were so deeply resented for absolutely no reason at all. They had never done anything to harm American society, or to inflict damage on any one particular man. Yet, discrimination sometimes ran so deep, as to cause bloodshed and violence. Blacks had to face loads of racism and discrimination, which has left a huge scar on the African-American community.

Although the Declaration of Independence promised equality for every man, the definition of man was very obscure. “Man” did not include blacks, women, or other minority groups. How can the

term “man” encompass such a large denotation, yet such a small connotation? As victims of injustice and inequality, blacks suffered from unfair attacks and punishments. It is completely outrageous how the color of your skin dictates where you sit on a bus, whether you’re allowed to enter a public building, or where you go to the restroom. It amazes at the prevalence of such ignorance and incompetence of Americans at that time. I’m not trying to target American society or anything, but there must have been a serious flaw somewhere. An example in the movie was when Mr. Tolsen was arrested by the sheriff, who had no evidence that Mr. Tolsen had done anything wrong. This proves that the law obviously did not protect black citizens at all – a severe defect in our political system.

Although there are many clear examples of the physical exhaustion and abuse blacks suffered from, some challenges that cannot be seen on the outside are mental stress and frustration. Blacks could take physical exhaustion. What doesn’t kill you makes you stronger. However, mental exhaustion was a completely different thing. If the mind becomes crippled, the entire body goes down. Blacks suffered a lot of frustration from the daily challenges they faced. It was no easy task to wake up every day, knowing that you would be picked on and abused. This sometimes drove them insane, leading to mental illness and death. The psychological impact of all the abuse they faced was overwhelming, as shown in the film. After Henry witnessed the mob burning the negro, he fumed off into the night, only to come home drunk and dazed. This was not the only time where mental stress got to him. It happened several other times during the film, proving that frustration and mental exhaustion would definitely consume victim blacks. As *The Great Debaters* showed, there was no remedy to mental decapitation. It would scar blacks for life, and leave them hopeless and weak, succumbing like fallen prey to their adversities.

The black experience was not pleasant or exhilarating; neither was it meaningless. Learning from this experience, blacks rose to the challenge and slowly, but surely, overcame their challenges. They saw the paths laid out for them, and after deciding that none of these paths would bring change, they paved their own path. The black experience is paradoxical. It holds the memories of a terrible age, but also the promise of a new one. Blacks have faced discrimination, injustice, frustration, and mental deterioration. Yet look at where they are today. What better example than our own President? The inauguration of President Barack Obama is the ideal picture of how blacks have come so far, and accomplished so much. Let every February be a month where we all reflect back on the black experience, because it doesn’t only apply to blacks, but to people of all different races. After fighting and struggling for hundreds of years, they proved to the world, and most importantly, themselves, that success lies in one’s own hands, not anyone else’s.